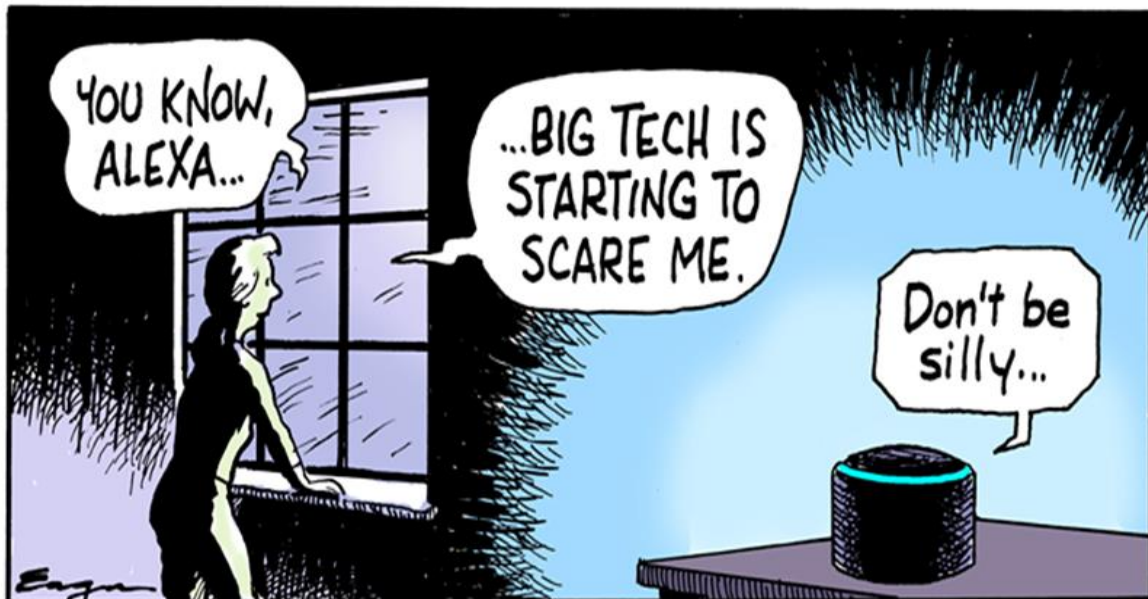


# MIT 2100G POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MEDIA



**Instructor:** Dr. Nick Dyer-Witheford

**Office Hours:** Tuesday 1:30-3:30, FNB 4045

**Email:** [ncdyerwi@uwo.ca](mailto:ncdyerwi@uwo.ca)

**Lectures:** Thursday, 2:30-4:30, HSB 40

**Description:** This course introduces basic concepts of political economy to the study of contemporary media and provides students with the tools to analyze intersections of power and wealth in societies and economies increasingly centered on the profitable exploitation of culture and information.

**Objectives:** We apply political economy to analysis of the giant platforms of digital capitalism, such as Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple, and Microsoft, and to related social issues of the gig-economy, the gender-gap in high-tech, surveillance society and cyberwar.

**Materials:** There are two course texts, Vincent Mosco's *Becoming Digital: Towards a Post-Internet Society* and Nick Srnicek's *Platform Capitalism* (both available from the University Bookstore), plus additional short readings on the course OWL site.

**Outcomes:** Students who pass this course will have an understanding of the principles informing various schools of political economy of media. They will be able to apply these concepts to researching and analyzing digital media including search engines, social media platforms and entertainment media..

## Lecture & Reading Schedule

Jan 9 *Introduction*. Reading: Mosco, Chapter 1; Srnicek, Introduction. No tutorials this week.

Jan 16 *How We Got Here*. Mosco, Chapter 2; Srnicek, Chapter 1., Short readings on OWL: “One Nation, Tracked.” Tutorials start this week. Essay 1 set.

Jan 23 *Power, Wealth, Technology*. Mosco Chapter 3. Short readings on OWL “Optimized Primed”

Jan 30 *Platform Capitalism*. Srnicek, Chapter 2. Short readings on OWL: “Facebook Decade”.

Feb 6. *Platform Wars*. Reading: Srnicek 3. Short readings on OWL “Microsoft Wins Pentagon Contract”.

Feb 13 *Platform Scandals*. Mosco, Chapter 4. Short readings on OWL “How Smart Should a City Be?”  
**Essay 1 due.** Essay 2 set.

Feb 20 Spring Reading Week. Revise for mid-term.

Feb 27 **Mid Term Exam.**

March 5 *Gender Gap*. Reading on OWL: “The Google Women’s Walkout” and “When Google Walked”

Mar 12 *Gig Economy*. Readings on OWL “Strike 2.0” and “Tech Worker Activism”

Mar 19 *Heavy Bugsplat*. Reading: Mosco, Chapter 5. Short reading on OWL “Huawei versus the. US”.

March 26 *Public Utility*. Mosco, Chapter 6. Short readings on OWL “Big Tech Invincibility Cracks”. **Essay 2 due.**

April 2 *Conclusion and Revision Session*.

## Tutorials & Teaching

**The Course Instructor.** The course instructor, Dr. Nick Dyer-Witheford, designs and administers the course, decides what materials to cover, sets the assignments and exams and delivers the lectures. If you have an issue that cannot be resolved by your Tutorial Leader contact the instructor.

**Tutorial Leaders.** Tutorial Leaders (aka Teaching Assistants) lead tutorials, clarify and extend the course material, lectures and reviews, hold office hours (announced in the tutorial) and collect and evaluate all assignments. Nobody else will mark your work. They handle concerns about writing, preparing for exams, and composing and improving your work. They are here to help. The TAs and instructor work together, meet to compare notes about how the course is proceeding, and together form a teaching team. Tutorial Leaders run their tutorials as they see fit, but maintain grading and pedagogical consistency between groups.

**Tutorial sections.** You have been assigned to one of the tutorials listed below. You cannot change your tutorial without approval from a FIMS Academic Advisor. Do not ask your course instructor or TA for permission to change tutorial. Find the classrooms: <http://www.uwo.ca/westerndir/help/buildings.html>

### Tutorial Sections

Section	Component	Days	Start Time	End Time	Location	TA	TA Email
002	TUT	Th	4:30 PM	5:30 PM	FNB-2230	Virginia Parnell	vparnell@uwo.ca
003	TUT	Th	4:30 PM	5:30 PM	UC-1225	Mason Brooks	mbrook9@uwo.ca
004	TUT	W	5:30 PM	6:30 PM	UC-3225	Aidan Warlow	awarlow2@uwo.ca
005	TUT	W	5:30 PM	6:30 PM	UC-1225	Allessandra Mularoni	amularon@uwo.ca
006	TUT	W	4:30 PM	5:30 PM	FNB-2230	Liam Morantz	lmorantz@uwo.ca
007	TUT	F	10:30 AM	11:30 AM	SH-3317	Charlotte Panneton	cpanneto@uwo.ca
008	TUT	F	10:30 AM	11:30 AM	FNB-1240	Sabrina Hope	shope@uwo.ca
009	TUT	Th	7:00 PM	8:00 PM	HSB-11	Ryan Schroeder	rschroe3@uwo.ca
010	TUT	Th	7:00 PM	8:00 PM	UC-1225	Sananda Sahoo	ssahoo3@uwo.ca

## Assignments & Guidelines

**Course Requirements.** To complete this course, you must do the introductory assignments, two essays and the final examination, and regularly attend and contribute to tutorials.

Assignment	Due Date	Value
Tutorial Participation	Throughout	10%
Essay 1	Feb. 13	20%
Mid-Term	Feb 27	20%
Essay 2	Mar 26	20%
Final exam	TBA	30%

**Tutorial attendance & participation (10%).** You must regularly attend tutorials, and come prepared, i.e. having done the week's readings, willing to ask and answer questions and participate in tutorial discussions and presentations as required by your tutorial leader.

**Essays (2 @ 20% each = 40%).** Two essays of approximately 1250 words each, double-spaced, 1" margins. They will be handed in to your TA at the lecture— Essay #1 on Feb. 6, Essay #2 on Mar. 19. The details for these assignments will be posted on course website no later than two weeks prior to the due dates. The assignments must follow the Chicago Manual of Style Author-Date system for citations and general formatting. Details at [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html). Include a separate title page with your name, date, course title, tutorial section number, and TA name. *Late essays are penalized 10% of the essay mark per day late, and are not accepted more than a week late.* Extensions are only given under the conditions specified in the “Notes From the Dean’s Office” (see below).

**Mid-Term. (20%)** This will be a closed book exam consisting of short answer questions, in class, Mar. 5. Any accommodated make up exams will be held on the Friday sessions set aside for this purpose by FIMS Student Services: March 6, 13, 20, 27.

**Final Exam (30%).** The final exam will be a closed book exam consisting of short answer and essay questions. The exam will cover the entire course, but with emphasis on the second half of course (after the mid-term). The date for the final exam has not been set at this time – once it is set by central administration, I will inform the class. Be aware that final exams take place after classes end. Having travel plans that conflict with the exam date is not a legitimate excuse for requesting an alternative arrangement and these types of requests will *not* be accommodated. The exam will be three hours in duration.

**Due Dates.** Due dates are provided in this syllabus. PLEASE NOTE: If you require an extension, refer to the Accommodation Policy described in the “Notes From the Dean’s Office”, below and contact your TA as soon as possible.

Students will receive graded work worth no less than 15% at least 3 days prior to the deadline for withdrawal without academic penalty. This year, the date by which students are to have received at least 15% of their grade in a first semester course is March 4. See: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/exam/evaluation\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/evaluation_undergrad.pdf). Please note, students who receive academic accommodation for the assignments on which these grades are based may not receive feedback in time to meet this deadline. Students are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the grades they have received in their courses.

### **Laptops and Electronic Devices**

Laptops and other electronic devices can be helpful in the classroom, both for note taking and for looking up relevant online resources, but they can also be distracting and disruptive. You are permitted to bring laptops, tablets, etc. into the lectures for class related purposes but this privilege will be revoked for the class if it is abused, even by a few individuals. If you want to continue having access to digital devices in the lecture, don’t use them for taking phone calls, checking your email, texting, playing games, watching movies, etc. No electronic devices will be allowed in exams.

# NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Winter 2020

## Rights and Responsibilities

The conditions governing a student's ability to pursue their undergraduate education at Western are ratified by Senate and can be found on the Academic Policies section of the University Secretariat:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic\\_policies/rights\\_responsibilities.html](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/rights_responsibilities.html)

## Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

## Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence. All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software Turnitin under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system.

## Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#)

## Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the

semester, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- during exam periods,
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are NOT met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate, if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact the FIMS Undergraduate Student Services Office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see [Policy on Academic Consideration For Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#) and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf)

## Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Academic Calendar](#).

## Grading at FIMS

- Normally, first year courses required for entry into an MIT or MPI module (MIT 1020E and MIT 1025F/G) are expected to have a course average between 68-72%.
- Normally, second year required courses (MIT 2000, 2100, 2200, 2500) are expected to have a course average between 70 and 75%.
- Normally, third year required courses (MIT 3000, 3100) are expected to have a course average between 72 and 77%.

**Elective courses and 4<sup>th</sup> year seminars have no recommended course averages.**

## Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

## SUPPORT SERVICES – LINKS

Office of the Registrar:

[www.registrar.uwo.ca](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca)

Student Development Centre:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca)

Psychological Services:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych)

Services for Students with Disabilities:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd)

Accessibility

Information:

[www.accessibility.uwo.ca](http://www.accessibility.uwo.ca)

[/ Writing Support](#)

Centre:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing)

Learning Skills Services:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning)

Indigenous Services:

<http://indigenous.uwo.ca/>

International and Exchange Student

Centre:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca/int](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/int) Career

Centre at Western:

[www.success.uwo.ca/careers/](http://www.success.uwo.ca/careers/)

## Appendix A: Suggested Grade Ranges in MIT, MPI and MTP

### Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range

These guidelines are benchmarks, and are not to be followed as rigid regulations. They will be adjusted as appropriate to take into account the level of the course and any specific instructions given by a professor. As well, competency in English language usage (including spelling and grammar) may be taken into account in the assignment of grades by individual instructors. Note that the 70-79 grade range is broken into two divisions, as this is the grade range into which a large number of students fall.

#### 90-100 (Outstanding, A+)

The report shows sparkling originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the writing and background research is exemplary.

#### 80-89 (Excellent, A)

The report shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic; it gets to the heart of the matter with comments and/or questions. It is clearly focused and logically organized. The quality of writing makes the report immediately understandable. Mastery of complex material and ideas is demonstrated. The report is of appropriate length, while preserving the priorities and emphasis of the material, so that the result is meaningful, not simplistic.

#### 75-79 (Very Good, B+)

The report shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. Claims are supported by ample evidence and the components of the topic are well-researched and presented. The topic is addressed in reasonable depth and/or breadth and covers material appropriate to the course. The analysis is organized around focal points and the argument is easily followed. The report demonstrates an above average ability to write in an intelligible style and to condense material meaningfully and with a concern for priorities of that material.

#### 70-74 (Good, B)

The report shows an attempt at analysis and critical thinking. Claims are supported by reasonable evidence. The topic is addressed in some depth and/or breadth, with references to the appropriate literature and course material. The analysis is organized around focal points. The report is generally well written and well argued.

#### 60-69 (Competent, C)

The report demonstrates adequate comprehension of the topic. The report is on topic and is a reasonable summary of material covered in the course, but goes no further. Facts are stated accurately; the quality of writing is sufficiently intelligible with enough elaboration and enough connections made between ideas to permit a reader to understand the point of the report.

#### 50-59 (Marginal, D)

The report shows less than adequate comprehension of the topic and of the material covered by the course. The report is a less than adequate summary of sources and/or is considerably off-topic. Facts are stated inaccurately or ambiguously; the writing style is difficult to follow; there is insufficient elaboration to permit reader's comprehension of relations among ideas; little judgment is shown in selecting detail for inclusion in the report.

#### Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)

The report demonstrates a failure to comprehend the topic. The material is disorganized and unintelligible. The report clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment.

## Appendix B: Guidelines of Academic Appeals for FIMS Students

### Grounds for Appeal:

The Faculty of Information and Media Studies does not view the appeals process as an opportunity for students to solicit a second opinion on a grade assigned to a particular piece of work. Appeals must pertain to the final grade in a course, and will only be entertained if sufficient grounds for appeal can be met, including: medical or compassionate circumstances, a defect in the evaluation process, bias, inaccuracy or unfairness.

### Stages in the Appeals Process:

**The first stage of the process is a discussion of the disputed grade with the appropriate Teaching Assistant (if applicable), and subsequently, the course Instructor.** For grades assigned to individual assignments, essays, lab reports, projects and tests completed throughout the term, the student first must appeal to the Teaching Assistant or Instructor of the course, within three weeks of the date on which the Instructor or Teaching Assistant returned the assignments to the class. The Appeals Committee will not hear any further appeals about the final grade in any course unless this first step has been taken.

**If completion of the first stage has not resolved the matter, the student may appeal the final grade in the course to the FIMS Appeals Committee.** Appeals of final grades must be **within the time frame indicated in the Undergraduate Calendar.** It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the appeal is submitted within the deadline. The student shall submit a formal letter to the FIMS Appeals Committee outlining the grounds for the appeal, the remedy sought and relevant materials including the information about when and with whom (Teaching Assistant and/or Instructor) the student met, as described in Stage 1. If the appeal involves a request for work to be regraded, the original marked work and a clean copy (if possible) must be included. If the appeal is commenced once the deadline has passed, it will not be considered either by the Appeals Committee or by the Associate Dean.

### **The FIMS Appeals Committee has the discretion to determine whether the grounds for appeal have been met.**

If the Committee deems that the reasons for the appeal are not legitimate, the Associate Dean will be informed. The appeal will be terminated and the student will be informed.

### **If the Committee decides that the grounds for appeal have been met, the following steps will be taken:**

1. the course Instructor will be shown the appeal letter and offered an opportunity to make a written response;
2. if work is to be regraded, a reader will be appointed who is competent in the area in question and was not involved in the assignment of the original mark. The reader will consider the work in question and will arrive at an independent evaluation. If there is a large discrepancy between the original mark and the regraded mark, a second reader may be appointed by the Committee. **If the appointed reader(s) arrive at a grade within five marks of the original, the original grade will stand.**

### **The FIMS Appeals Committee will review the evidence and will make a recommendation on the case to the Associate Dean Undergraduate.**

The Associate Dean Undergraduate will consider the recommendation from the Appeals Committee, and will make a decision. The student and the instructor will be notified promptly and in writing by the Associate Dean of the decision and of the change in grade, if any. Within the Faculty of Information and Media Studies, the Associate Dean's decision on the matter is final.

Further appeals are possible under certain circumstances to the Senate Review Board Academic (for Undergraduate students) or to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (for Graduate students) but the student should carefully consult the guidelines regarding such Appeals.